

MAKING MONEY WITH BBSes

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MAKING MONEY WITH BBSes

Most of the BBSes in operation are for recreation only, and will never see a profit. In fact, almost ALL non-commercial BBSes lose money. This is why a lot of them look at being a sysop as a hobby, and not a business. They lose too much money to call it a business.

You cannot go into the business thinking that you are going to have hundreds of people wanting to pay \$25 for a yearly membership to your BBS, unless you are a special BBS.

If you are catering to specific audience, then you might be able to charge for access. There are just too many public BBSes out there to be able to charge for access time. Many people will avoid any BBS that they know charges for access. There are exceptions to this:

If you are set up ONLY as a multi-play games BBS.

If you offer a service just to certain people (i.e. computer technicians, etc).

Anything that is geared toward helping people.

If you are planning on charging, the basic rule is: Make sure that you offer them something they CAN'T get somewhere else for free. That is the key.

If you are going to offer a Business BBS, then you may choose not to pay for access time, but rather charge the companies for advertising on the BBS. Then you can let regular people on the BBS "shop around." You might also choose to have a Helpful BBS that just offers help about anything that they are willing to ask help for. This would be kind of like a round-table help forum. Anybody who has questions or answers could join.

If you are into collectibles, or rare items such as antiques, you can make a lot of money with a BBS. You set up your BBS so that people can advertise, buy, sell, and trade all of the items you deal with, just by paying a small annual fee of \$25.

BECOMING AN EXPERT

If there were only two things I wanted you to know about operating a BBS they would be: 1) BBSes Cost Time, and 2) BBSes Cost Money. In other words, operating a BBS will end up costing you more time and more money than you first expected.

You will want to get to know your phone service representatives. They will be able to help you with any phone line problems you run across when dealing with your BBS. Also, if you have a hacker, then they can help you get out of the situation, and tell you how to correct the problem.

You need to remember that a good BBS doesn't just happen overnight. It will take you a little while to get prepared for going online. You need

to make sure that everything is ready to be put into practice.

A BBS sysop is like a control technician. They have full control over your users. If they don't comply by the rules, then kick them off the BBS. If they feel that you are not a push-over, then they will respect you. Make sure that they know that you will not tolerate disturbances online.

You should try to join a sysop support group in your town. This is not saying that sysops need mental help, but it is saying that sysops do get stressed out a lot. If you have several sysops in a room together, they can give each other ideas about how to be a better sysop. You can also just have a good time talking to other people who enjoy doing the same thing you do.

You should pay attention to the comments your users make about your BBS, and other ones. If they are saying that they like "this" feature about "X" BBS, and "that" feature about "Y" BBS, then you should try to offer "this" and "that" on your BBS, also. If they are saying that they would like you to offer something that you don't, then if enough of them request it, then you should consider it.

You should make a note to them stating that it DOES cost money to provide them with that service. Tell them that you need a majority of them to donate the \$5 or else you won't be able to do it. Have them list their name, and put yes or no whether they will donate. If they want the service, they will donate the \$5. Make sure and tell them that ALL users will have access to this door, regardless whether or not they sign the petition or donate \$5. You might consider telling them that you will divide the money that is left over evenly and distribute it among all who donated.

You will need to remember something else, also. Word of your BBS will get around eventually. What people say about it will depend on what the people using it think of it. If users think that your BBS is a good one, then you will see a rapid increase in users; however, if you obtain a reputation for being a bad BBS, then that word will spread like a plague.